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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9063
INFO RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 2759
RUEHAB/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3621
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 9834
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4235
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0123
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0150
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0113
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 3838
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2116
RUEHK/T/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0211
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0783
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0949
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 000082

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TAGS: PREL PGOV KCRM EAID UZ

SUBJECT: SENSITIVE INVESTIGATIVE UNIT STILL FUNCTIONING AND
WAITING

REF: A. 07 TASHKENT 1900
1B. 07 TASHKENT 2000

Classified By: Poloff Tim Buckley for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Summary: On January 17 poloff visited the Sensitive Investigative Unit (SIU) within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which was established with the assistance of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) expertise and funds as well as funds from the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). The purpose of the visit was to conduct end-use monitoring, as virtually all of the equipment for this special unit was provided with U.S. assistance; however, it was also a chance to talk with rank-and-file counter-narcotics officers who have continued to staff the Sensitive Investigative Unit since the Government of Uzbekistan suspended cooperation with the Drug Enforcement Administration. Despite fears the unit might have effectively been dissolved and its equipment redistributed to other units or agencies, poloff found everything intact and appropriately used by a professional cadre of law enforcement officers. The officers acknowledge that the loss of the salary supplements hit them hard but insist no officers transferred or quit as a result.

Rank-and-file staff expressed appreciation for the previously rendered equipment and training and are hopeful that the Drug Enforcement Administration will resume active cooperation with Uzbekistan. More analysis will be provided septel. Officers also noted that Uzbekistan plans to increase the level of its participation in the Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC) as a result of successful initial feedback during the pilot phase. End summary.

Required End-Use Monitoring

¶2. (C) In preparation for the mandatory annual end-use monitoring report, on January 17 poloff visited the Sensitive Investigative Unit in Tashkent, which is part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs but operates as a distinct entity. It was established with the assistance of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, which also provided ongoing training and salary supplements until the Government of Uzbekistan suspended cooperation on this project in late ¶2005. Funds from the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs were used to provide virtually all equipment for the Sensitive Investigative Unit, ranging from office furniture to sophisticated communications and surveillance equipment. Post made this entity a high priority on the end-use monitoring schedule due to the large quantity of donated equipment as well as to ascertain whether the Sensitive Investigative Unit still even exists in the wake of the suspension of cooperation.

All Equipment Present and Accounted For

¶3. (C) The main point of contact was Shavkat Zuhfarov, the Senior Analytic Officer and one of 25 members of the Sensitive Investigative Unit. He said the commander made him personally responsible for safeguarding the inventory of U.S.-funded equipment, and he appears to take this job very seriously. While our visit was coordinated via diplomatic note (a requirement in any dealings with the Government of Uzbekistan) and therefore not a surprise, it was apparent

during our inspection that Zuhfarov and the officers are intimately familiar with the advantages and disadvantages of various equipment and take good care of it. He noted that his team is careful not to tell other police units or government agencies that they have such good equipment, lest they attempt to requisition it.

¶4. (C) Among specific items poloff identified in the office were digital cameras (with extras neatly stacked in a cabinet); video camcorders; handcuffs; Motorola walkie-talkies; satellite phones (although useful, they could not pay the monthly bills and placed them all in storage); binoculars; GPS units still in their packaging (they never received corresponding software and maps and are thus not utilized); televisions; numerous computers in use and distributed throughout offices on the premises; drug test kits; typewriter; and cassette recording devices (generally not utilized because an audible clicking sound alerted suspected drug dealers during undercover work). The officers were particularly proud of a sophisticated distance video recording device, which provides valuable evidence in their investigations. The officers even made their own innovation to suit the local environment, installing a small camera in a locally-obtained bag to enable more discreet operations.

¶5. (C) U.S. funds provided 22 vehicles for the Sensitive Investigative Unit, and poloff confirmed that all are accounted for by matching the vehicle identification numbers from a list. Two Opels are broken down in an on-site garage, and the Uzbeks are unable to afford expensive repairs; however, all of the rest were in good operating condition. The fleet is mixed to help officers blend in, and they take care to repair the vehicles in local garages to maintain a low profile. Reflecting the varied work shifts, some vehicles were presented somewhat late for inspection after officers returned from an early morning raid which netted arrests and 10 kilos of narcotics. Zuhfarov actively worked his cell phone to coordinate a visual inspection of approximately eight other vehicles which were operationally active at the time of our visit; they all promptly returned to headquarters to accommodate our request to see all vehicles.

¶ 16. (C) Poloff directly asked Zuhfarov whether the unit has lost staff or operational capacity as a result of the suspension of cooperation with the Drug Enforcement Administration. He acknowledged that the loss of the supplemental pay was a big blow and "hurt," but he insisted that morale is still decent and no officers left the unit as a result. There has been modest turnover, but new officers have been hired in their place. He also said the unit has maintained its active workload, including complex investigations and carefully coordinated arrests. He reported that there were no efforts to disband the unit or reduce its role, which seems consistent with poloff's observations.

Requests for Equipment and Training

¶ 17. (C) The rank-and-file officers are very eager to resume cooperation with the Drug Enforcement Administration and lamented the suspension of cooperation. Several on hand had

participated in U.S.-funded training programs, and spoke fondly of the skills they gained in Quantico, Virginia and Baltimore, Maryland with their American counterparts, whom they named. They would value additional training, particularly for the new additions to the team, and would like to upgrade equipment to the newest generation of technology. Several dozen cell phones are now obsolete, but Zuhfarov even keeps the broken ones for inventory purposes. They noted a need to upgrade all cameras and recording devices to digital format, and praised the 3.2 megapixel cameras previously provided (they actually have more than necessary and preserve the extras in their original boxes).

On the Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC)

¶ 18. (C) Zuhfarov said that, although the recently launched Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC) is still in a pilot phase, the Ministry of Internal Affairs is satisfied by initial results. He noted that if the initial six-month phase is successful, the Government of Uzbekistan will increase its representation at the organization's headquarters in Almaty. There is currently only one Uzbek officer (who represents the Sensitive Investigative Unit), and Zuhfarov himself may be tapped to relocate to Almaty to augment the counter-narcotics profile. Other Uzbek agencies, including the National Security Service (NSS), would also send representation. Zuhfarov characterized cooperation on counter-narcotics between the Central Asian republics as strong, but noted "the criminal networks have better coordination and communication than we do."

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